District Headquarters of Bihar, for which equipment orders have been placed:

Bokaro, Gaya, Daltonganj, Dumka, Hazaribagh, Katihar, Sasaram, Saharsa, Samastipur, Supaul and Siwan.

(iv) It is also proposed to progressively provide Internet nodes in all District Headquarters of Bihar.

Replacement of Indian Telegraph Act, 1885

1742. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a legislation providing for creation of a Communications Commission on the lines of the Federal Communications Commission of the US to handle all the regulating and licensing functions in the area of telecom, broadcasting and internet is proposed to be introduced;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether proposed legislation will replace Indian Telegraph Act of 1885 and other such old laws, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) to (c) Sir, a Group has been constituted under the chairmanship of the Finance Minister with one of the mandates to prepare the draft of new legislation to replace Indian Telegraph Act, 1885; keeping in view the rapid convergence of telecom, computers, television and electronics. The Group is examining all these aspects. The Group has not yet submitted its report.

Siphoning of Bank Drafts

1743. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there have been several complaints about the siphoning of Bank Drafts worth crores of rupees by the city's postal department employees in connivance with the bank employees and the middlemen having bank accounts;

(b) whether Government have made any inquiry to identify the postal/ bank employees involved in the racket, their modus operandi and the estimated amount involved;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the action taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) No, Sir. There have been isolated/sporadic complaints about abstraction/pilferage of Bank Drafts/ Warrants/Dividends etc. from Registered articles.

(b) and (c) When such complaints are received, immediate enquiries are taken up and the cases are also reported to Police/CBI. Departmental action is also initiated against official found responsible. Inquiries have revealed that Bank Drafts or other instruments are pilferred from registered articles during transmission and are misused by outsiders opening fictitious Savings Bank accounts either in Post Offices or in Banks. The estimated amount involved during the year 1999-2000 is about Rs. 27.25 lakhs.

(d) The department has taken the following measures to check instances of loss/abstraction from registered articles:

(i) A detailed Action Plan has been prepared and circulated to field units to prevent instances of pilferage/theft from postal articles during transit.

(ii) Circle Checking Squads have been formed to pay surprise visits to oversee proper accounting, safe transmission and safe and prompt delivery of accountable articles.

(iii) Circles have been instructed to take deterrent action against officials found involved in any case of loss/pilferage/abstraction.

(iv) Instructions have been issued to report cases to police/CBI for detailed investigations and ensure close monitoring and follow up with these authorities.

(v) Financial institutions and Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) have also been requested to stop using window type envelopes and also indicate the relevant bank account number on the instrument.

(vi) Close liasion is maintained with the concerned police authorities for the cases taken up by these authorities themselves.